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Report of the Agent of the Penobscot Tribe of Indians

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Indian Agent, State of Maine

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REPORT OF THE AGENT

OF THE

PENOBSCOT TRIBE OF INDIANS

FOR THE YEAR ENDING

DECEMBER 1, 1866.

Published by order of Executive Council dated December 21, 1866.

AUGUSTA:
STEVENS & SAYWARD, PRINTERS TO THE STATE.
1866.

REPORT.

To the Honorable Governor and Council of Maine :

I respectfully submit the following report in regard to the Penobscot Tribe of Indians, for the year ending December 1st, 1866. The amount of expenditures during that time, as will more fully appear by the accompanying account, is as follows :

For amount paid S. S. Committee of Oldtown, Greenbush and Lincoln, as per resolve,	\$250 00
paid Joseph Attian, Governor, as per resolve,	50 00
expended for agricultural purposes, as per resolve,	1,000 00
expended in building school-house, as per resolve,	400 00
expended for goods for annuity, as per resolve,	2,000 00
expended in paying bounty on crops, as per resolve,	470 90
salary for year ending December 1st, as per resolve,	300 00
expended for goods for spring dividend,	643 88
expended for support of poor, aged, infirm and sick,	1,609 14
expended for medicine and medical attendance,	256 94
expended for funeral expenses,	278 55
expended for wood for poor and sick,	231 85
expended for incidental expenses,	223 29
salary as superintendent farming,	150 00
	\$7,864 55
RECEIPTS.	
Warrant in March, 1866,	\$2,000 00
May,	2,000 00
September,	3,000 00
December,	811 90
Amount corn, flour, pork and molasses remaining from spring dividend,	52 65

During this year the Superintending School Committee have for some cause failed to furnish me with their revision of the census of this tribe. The whole number reported last year was five hundred (500). There has been during the year an unusual amount of sickness among the tribe. I do not know of any particular cause to which it may be attributed. There have been several cases where the diseases have been contracted in the army, others by exposures in their mode of living at home—in the woods while hunting, and in the spring driving logs—and a large number of cases of pulmonary diseases and fevers.

Schools have been taught by female teachers on Oldtown, Olamon and Mattanawcook Islands, under the immediate superintendence of the several school committees named in the appropriation act. The management of this department has been prudent and satisfactory to the scholars and parents. The attendance and progress of the pupils have been as good as heretofore, and the most of the adult members of the tribe manifest a commendable zeal and interest in the welfare of their schools. I would refer to the reports of the committees for further particulars in this branch.

At the last session of the Legislature an appropriation of four hundred dollars was made for building a school-house on Oldtown Island, and placed under my charge. I have built, in season for its occupation during the past summer, in a central and convenient location between the two villages on said island, a house sufficiently large to accommodate the school. The appropriation has, notwithstanding the increased price of labor and material, nearly paid all the expense of building and furnishing the house.

The lands of the tribe comprise the islands in Penobscot river above Oldtown Falls, and the cultivated portions lie mostly along the shores of these islands, occasioned probably by the convenience thus obtained to the water, the only means of transportation of their crops. While the location of the cultivated lands for this and other advantages is favorable, it is liable to other and serious disadvantages, one of which has occurred this year. The river in the spring overflowed these lands to a considerable extent, and by the frequent rains following it was impossible to plant until quite late in the season, consequently the crops raised are smaller than might have been expected, although owing to the increased amount appropriated for seed and plowing, a larger extent of land has been cultivated and the result of the produce raised is about the same as last year.

In this connection I would renew my suggestion made in my former reports that there should be granted the Indians the power to lease a portion of their land for a term of years, subject to the approval of the Agent, at a rent to be paid annually, and requiring the lessee to make yearly certain improvements to be specified in the lease. The Indians, as I understand the law, do not now have this power, and the Agent only has power to sanction a lease for one year. The State is the owner of the fee of all their lands, and each member of the tribe has a lot assigned to him to occupy during his life, and at his decease the same lot is assigned as near as

may be to his heirs. The land, other than what is cultivated by them every year, is in part wood land, and other portions covered with a small, stunted growth of bushes, and also a part once improved but afterwards laid down to grass. As the Indians do not have stock to eat the hay they have always sold this grass or hay from year to year to the whites. The result has been that bushes and wild grasses have been allowed to grow up in the mowing lands, and the land itself is greatly impoverished. The Indian has not the means or the inclination, nor does it seem to be policy for the State to make sufficient appropriation to reclaim these lands and make them productive, while there are whites in the vicinity who would take a given quantity of land, pay a rent, clear up the bushes and otherwise cultivate and improve the land, if there was some way whereby they could hold it for a sufficient length of time to secure to them a return for their necessary outlay. By so doing land that now yields but little, and other lands that yield nothing, could be made valuable, thus increasing at present the income to the tribe from rents, and hereafter from hay, oats and other saleable crops, and thereby relieving the State from a portion of the amount now necessarily expended for the aged, infirm and poor. I would respectfully ask that this power be granted to the Indians.

The office of Superintendent of Farming was abolished by the last Legislature, and no provision was made for employing any person to "instruct the Indians in the arts of husbandry, assist them in fencing and tilling their grounds and raising such articles of production as their lands are adapted to," as is required by the stipulations of the treaty of the tribe with Massachusetts, dated June 30th, 1818, and assumed by this State; probably this was overlooked in the pressure of business before the body. Previous to the creation of the office of Superintendent, those duties were devolved by law upon the Agent, for which he was allowed the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars. Upon consultation in regard to this matter with Hon. Mr. Ruggles of the Council, by his advice and direction I have attended to these duties and have charged therefor the above named sum, and respectfully ask that the same may be allowed, and that the omission in the law may be supplied by the action of the present Legislature.

The operation of the law in regard to the election of Delegate to the State Legislature appears to be satisfactory to the majority of the tribe and to obviate many of the disadvantages of the former system, and has on the whole been a good change. This year,

agreeably to that law, the "New Party" refrained from voting and the "Old Party" elected one of their own number Delegate.

The shingles on the church have become defective and worn, and it would seem to be good policy to shingle the church throughout to preserve the rest of the building.

The burying-ground of the tribe at Oldtown Island from long use has become so filled that it is desirable that it should be enlarged or a new lot taken: the situation of the present ground is such that it cannot be enlarged, and the two parties have agreed upon a location, have raised among themselves the necessary amount and have purchased the lot for a new burial ground. It now needs to be fenced and a cross erected. I have estimated the necessary expense for this purpose to be about one hundred dollars, and ask an appropriation of that sum be made.

The condition of the tribe during the past year has been on the whole prosperous. They have received good wages for their labor and have found ready sale for the results of their hunting expeditions, and also for their home productions.

GEO. F. DILLINGHAM,
Agent Penobscot Indians.